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FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS STAFF

REF: 1036

PROGRAM	FOCUS ON YOUTH	STATION	WNBC	
DATE	JUNE 11, 1978	6:05 AM	CITY	NEW YORK

FULL TEXT

ALEXANDER KENYON: This is Alexander Kenyon, inviting you to "Focus on Youth." This week, with Admiral Stanfield Turner, the Director of the CIA.

ANNOUNCER: "Focus on Youth," America's student-produced press conference of the air is made possible by funding from the Shell Oil Company.

KENYON: Our first question for Admiral Turner is from Mitch Semmel(?).

MITCH SEMMEL: Sir, early in January, former CIA Director Richard Helm said, quote, "If we treat people who do intelligence work as second class citizens, we are not going to be able to get anybody to do our dirty work for us," end quote. Admiral Turner, I'm curious to know whether the unfavorable portrayal of CIA agents in the press has made it difficult to find qualified agents for the Agency?

ADMIRAL STANFIELD TURNER: Yes. It has -- it has particularly affected our overseas relationships because the number of leaks that we've had in the United States press about our activities, the disclosures of classified information diminished confidence of people with whom we work overseas that they can work with us and have it kept in confidence.

SEMML: A number of people have said that -- well, in 1974 and '75, well, it was suddenly the CIA agents who were the enemies, who were made out to be the bad guys in the press. Two years lat -- two, three years later, when a number of them were released by the Agency under your order, suddenly they became the fall guys, and it was made to look like you were the bad guy, and I'm wondering if you think the press is just looking for a certain story in the CIA so that they can -- you know, sell copies out of it, or whatever?

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TURNER: I'm afraid I have to agree that that's the case. I found it ironic to think that the press was so concerned that we were reducing the number of spies in the CIA after all the complaints they'd made in previous years.

SEMMEL: I was wondering, Admiral Turner, here you are, the head of the CIA, and somebody, say, on the rank of a monarch or a leader of another country, comes to you and says, "We no longer can give you secrets for the reasons that you outlined." Now that we're here, what are you going to do in the future about that kind of thing?

TURNER: I'm doing everything I can to maintain confidence in our ability to keep secrets. We are prosecuting a man who wrote a book without authorization in accordance with his signed agreement and his personal promise to me. We are tightening our own security; we are tightening security with our contractors; we're doing everything we can to assure that what is a legitimate secret of this country is kept a secret.

KENYON: You've met Mitch Semmel; also on this week's panel is Dwight Holloway. Our guest is Admiral Stanfield Turner, and I'm Alexander Kenyon. We continue now with the questions from Dwight Holloway.

DWIGHT HOLLOWAY: Admiral Turner, there's been a lot of criticism over the free-handed foreign intelligence services, such as the Savak(?) and the Korean Central Intelligence Agency have in their intelligence gathering exploits in this country. What freedom are these intelligence services allowed while they're in the United States, and are they given access to CIA reports on United States citizens?

TURNER: The answer to your first question is, none. They have no special freedoms in this country. And the answer to your second question is, none. They're not given access to any reports on United States citizens.

ANNOUNCER: Stay tuned. "Focus on Youth" continues in a moment.

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KENYON: Welcome back to "Focus on Youth." Our guest is Admiral Stanfield Turner, the Director of the CIA.

Admiral Turner, you have been given, by executive order of President Carter, more power than any other CIA chief, and I was wondering if you could just discuss for a minute the giving of

that. You did not get the title of Director of National Intelligence, which scuttlebutt says you sought. Did you, in fact, want control of the National Security Agency and the National Reconnaissance Office, and, in short, did you get less than you expected?

TURNER: I am very pleased with the result that came out of all these negotiations. I have now been given enough additional authority to better co-ordinate the operations of a very complex number of US intelligence agencies. I think that's the key that we're looking for -- how do you bring all of our activities together into harmony and into maximum efficiency.

KENYON: Mitch Semmel?

SEMMLER: Do you think it's possible by co-ordinating -- by giving one man that much power, that you could once again have abuses similar to those committed by J. Edgar Hoover while he was head of the FBI?

TURNER: Absolutely not. You are talking about the word "power," and the authorities that I have been given by the new executive order are quite modest. They are, however, enough to encourage a bureaucratic sense of cooperation. I have not the ability to just run roughshod over any of these intelligence agencies.

KENYON: Dwight Holloway?

HOLLOWAY: Former CIA Director, John McCone, has stated that he feels that very few members of the administration and Congress should have access to sensitive matters. Do you feel that there should be tighter controls on the amount of -- or the individuals who have access to classified material?

TURNER: I believe that we are striking a good balance with the Congress with our two oversight committees on intelligence, in giving them an adequate amount of information to do a really thorough oversight job, and yet, asking them, when it's a particularly sensitive subject, to restrict the dissemination within the Congress so that we don't have a high probability of a leak. I have great confidence in the Congress in not leaking, but I also have a belief that the possibility of a secret leaking out is geometrically proportional to the number of people who know it, regardless of whether they're CIA officers, Congressmen, members of other parts of the executive branch.

And Dwight, let me go back and be sure I clarify a point from your previous question: we don't keep files on Americans -- this was one of reasons we don't give them out to any foreign intelligence agency, other than, of course, security checks on our own people to make sure they're ready to be employed here.

KENYON: Mitch Semmel?

SEMMEL: Admiral Turner, do you think that the CIA can try to prevent past agents from releasing books about agency activities without first of all violating Constitutional rights, and secondly, violating Jimmy Carter's promise for more open government?

TURNER: Yes, I think we can, because Mr. Smith didn't just make a promise to me; he signed a written agreement as part of the contract for employment here, and he clearly violated that agreement by not submitting his manuscript for our security review. We are going to the court with him, and the court will determine whether this violates any Constitutional arrangements.

SEMMEL: If there's an agent who finds some specific instances of abuse when he's been here, do you think he has a responsibility to let people know about it once he leaves the agency?

TURNER: Absolutely, and I'm pleased that you asked that question, and I would say he has a responsibility not to wait til he leaves the agency to do that, but he has a responsibility to let us know right away. And I have made it very clear to every employee that I -- that they have direct access to me for that purpose. In addition, in 1976, the President established an Intelligence Oversight Board, and any employee here, without checking with me, may go to that Board directly with a complaint. Beyond that, you have the two oversight committees of the Congress, the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, and people clearly can go there and lodge their complaints or their suggestions.

KENYON: Admiral Turner, those sub-committees you mentioned -- I was wondering if you ever felt that perhaps all this overview that Congress suddenly has of the Central Intelligence Agency is part of a larger switch back to the Congress as far as power goes, in adopting roles that previously would be thought of only as executive ones.

TURNER: Oh, I think there's an element of that, indeed, Alexander. However, I do feel that in the last six months, we've begun to see a settling down, a leveling out of this process, and I have great faith in our democratic system and that over any period of time, we settle out on what's always a very good and middle-of-the-road, generally, type of course, and I'm sure we will here.

SEMMEL: How did you personally go about establishing rapport with Congress, yourself, Admiral Turner, personally, when you arrived in Washington?

TURNER: Throughout my life I've found there's only one way to establish good rapport with people, and that's to be totally forthright, to be totally honest and frank with them.

KENYON: Dwight Holloway?

HOLLOWAY: Knowledgeable observers report that the major difference between the CIA and the KGB is that the CIA depends primarily upon electronic devices, whereas the KGB depends primarily upon informants for gathering information. However, there have been certain incidents in which the CIA was not apprised of the data that it had received; specifically, the CIA had information that South Africa had a nuclear facility in the Kalajari(?) Desert, but they didn't realize it until after the Soviets had the full story. Faced with this problem, why have over 200 people been fired who worked with counter-intelligence activities?

TURNER: Well, there are a lot of premises in what you're saying, Dwight, that are incorrect. First of all, the CIA does not have a bias towards technical collection; we look on technical and human collection as of equal importance. Secondly, over 200 people have not been fired from the counter-intelligence section; the total number of people who have been asked to leave this agency is about 250, and they all didn't come from the counter-intelligence section; they all came from the Directorate of Operations, we call it.

KENYON: I think Dwight opened up a lot of things that we'd like to dig at(?) more carefully. Specifically, the New York Times and, I know the press is inaccurate, but I've read so many consistent reports of the Ford and Carters administration, on technological means of covert operations rather than the human element. Are you, in fact, denying that this bias has existed for four or five years, despite the press accounts?

TURNER: Yes, I would deny that. What I would say is that over the last decade and a half, we've had a revolution in intelligence collection where the technical systems today bring in much greater quantities of information than they did before. But, the more information you get from technical systems, which generally tell you what happened yesterday or today some place in the world, the more you have to respond to the question that always comes from the decision maker, "Why did they do that?" "What are they going to do next?" People's intentions are the forte of the human intelligence collector. Therefore, the more technically collected information you have, the more you need the human to complement it. They work together.

KENYON: I understand that -- so what seems to be your point is that the analysis -- there's been a premium on analysis. I misrepresented the newspaper reports somewhat -- I think what they're talking about is the sort of spy with the turned up collar, or the man working in a foreign country --that there has been a real decrease in that type of operative.

TURNER: Well, that's what I mean by going out to find people's intentions is done by what we call human intelligence collection, which is making human contact with other people who give you information. Once you collect all the information from the technical systems, from human activities, you bring it in here to the headquarters and you analyze it. We have a very large research department, which is just like those on academic campuses, that takes all the pieces that come in from the collectors and tries to put them together and show what kind of picture the puzzle is.

KENYON: Do you feel you have enough money to develop the technological equipment that will be necessary to wage such a war as you suggest -- to complement the -- this human element?

TURNER: Yes. We -- you know, there's no bureaucrat who doesn't think he could use ten percent or twenty percent more, but I -- on balance, feel that we're in good condition.

KENYON: Mitch Semmel?

SEMMEL: I know that, for all the criticism of CIA activities, a number of people have really said that there have been a number of remarkable successes to go with CIA actions as well. And I'm curious -- in a number of specific incidents, a number of people have said, for example, that during the Viet Nam war, the CIA was regularly reporting more realistic assessments of what was going on in Southeast Asia, that if something was pessimistic but it was true, they were more - they were ready to present it. And they, for example, pointed out that there was a good likelihood of war in the Middle East in 1973, but in each case, the President involved tended to reject the specific political analysis given. And I'm just wondering if you think that President Carter has enough confidence in not only the intelligence gathering ability, but intelligence interpretation of the CIA to actually accept a political analysis?

TURNER: President Carter, on a number of occasions, has been most complimentary in public about the analysis that he is receiving, not only from the CIA, but from the other elements of the intelligence community. At the same time, the dilemma which you have pointed out very appropriately is one that will always

be with us with any president, with any decision maker, and it's just very, very difficult to know what to believe when the clues are always fragmentary, and there almost always are several interpretations of them. I am putting great emphasis on trying to insure that the interpretations we provide to the President and other top policymakers are not a single interpretation but several views with an explication of why it might be this, and why it might be that, so they can make a judgment on their own, because they have superior over-all knowledge of the situation.

KENYON: We were discussing with Admiral Zumwalt(?) the fact that Nixon, President Nixon, was so inaccessible, and he said that it was very, very tough to talk to the man face to face. And I'd just like to ask you, do you feel that you can go in, should the occasion arise of sufficient importance, and say to the President, "Look, this is how I feel," and have him really open and receptive to you, man to man?

TURNER: Absolutely. This President is very open, and it's a very rewarding experience to work for him, because he listens. He really pays attention to whatever you tell him, and one day I told him something, and about three weeks later, he quoted it back to me in some other conversation and I said, "My goodness, Mr. President! I'm worried, because once I put something in that computer memory of yours, it will never be erased, and if I make a mistake in putting it in, I'm in terrible trouble."

ANNOUNCER: More with our guest when "Focus on Youth" continues in a moment.

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KENYON: Welcome back to "Focus on Youth." Our guest is Admiral Stanfield Turner, the Director of the CIA. We continue now with a question from Mitch Semmel.

SEMTEL: Another question that Dwight raised is really more a philosophical consideration, and that is, I'm just curious as to what you see is the role of the CIA in a democratic society, and whether, in fact, you think that the Soviet KGB has a disadvantage because it operates in a totalitarian regime?

TURNER: On the first point, the role of, not only the CIA but the rest of our intelligence agencies in this country, is to defend the country. It's to insure that we're not taken advantage of because we are an open and free society in which other people can find out what we're doing, but, in their countries, have a closed society and not tell us about actions they're taking, not only in the military sphere, but in the political and economic sphere, that have a direct bearing and impact on you and me and our standard of living, and our safety.

KENYON: Dwight Holloway?

HOLLOWAY: Director Turner, is there any limit as far as action that the CIA can take to try to minimize a foreign threat? If President Carter, for instance, ordered you, or ordered the CIA to kill a foreign leader, such as Fidel Castro, would you have any moral reservations which would prevent you from carrying out such an order?

TURNER: Yes, I certainly would, and, on top of that, I have an order from President Carter that I'm forbidden to even plan or think about an assassination attempt. That's a very explicit Presidential directive.

HOLLOWAY: Has the CIA ever planned any assassination attempts in the past?

TURNER: I'm not prepared to comment on that, because, if I gave you a categoric answer, I haven't researched all the files; I've only been here a year and a quarter, and I'm concentrating on what we're going to do for this country tomorrow, rather than what we did yesterday.

KENYON: Can we turn to politics sort of within the CIA just a minute? I believe you referred earlier, or Mr. Holloway did, to the firing or dismissal of 250 employees of the CIA, which, in fact, seems to have been planned for some time. Now, I was wondering whether you felt that if you had to do it any different, you would have gone about the way and the manner of firing these people differently, considering the sort of brouhaha that came out in the press, or was there no way to avoid that?

TURNER: Well, you know, I'm sure we would do it differently; almost anything you do in life you would do differently if you had to do it over again. You can always try to improve. There just is not a pleasant way to ask dedicated people who have been with you ten to twenty years to step down and make way for the younger people who are coming along behind them, to remove excess layers of bureaucracy here at the headquarters. I wish we could have found a nice formula, but it just isn't an easy thing to do.

KENYON: Were you surprised by the reaction, or did you expect it?

TURNER: I was very disappointed when some of the people went out to the press, which is totally against the ethics of the intelligence profession.

KENYON: But, I just would like to ask you -- these people often could not have resumes that stated exactly what they had done and their competence and their leadership. I was wondering if you felt that the CIA, in the future, should have a way of better easing people out, and are there such plans?

TURNER: We already do have a program in the agency to help employees who either retire or leave or, in this case, are asked to leave, to find jobs in the outside economy, or in the rest of the government, and we have helped a number of these so far, and, in addition, we have hired over 60 of those asked to leave back into other portions of the agency where there were openings, so we've tried very hard to satisfy them, and, on top of that, 150 some are eligible for full and immediate retirement benefits. So we're talking about a very small number who either have not been relocated within the agency, elsewhere within the government, within the civilian economy, or have gone on full retirement.

KENYON: Thank you for explaining that.

Mitch Semmel?

SEMMLER: We mentioned earlier John Stockwell, former Chief of Covert Covert Operations in Angola, who has written a very controversial book, "In Search of Enemies." And he wrote in a recent editorial in "The New York Times," quote, "Secrecy breeds arrogance and inefficiency. The CIA has become careless of its own security abroad, and its covert operations have been almost comical in their clumsiness," end quote. Admiral Turner, do you think that Mr. Stockwell is just an embittered former employee, or do you think that his assessment is a legitimate one that must be answered?

TURNER: I think Mr. Stockwell has grossly overstated the case, and in that same article, he very pointedly misquoted me, so I'm not sure of the accuracy of the entire article.

KENYON: To turn once again to former employees of the CIA testifying in the public press, although in somewhat different circumstances. Former Director of the CIA, William Colby, told Mike Wallace on "Sixty Minutes," last week that he would draw the line on assassination of foreign leaders, which you also mentioned you would, but that we didn't see any problem with bribery. Where would you draw the line in sending your men into the field? There's a variety of covert activity all the way up from bribery -- often governments seem to run on bribery -- and all the way up to assassination. Where would you draw the line -- personally, morally?

TURNER: When you use the word "bribery," it has a pejorative connotation. It's quite a good connotation in our type of economy to say you reward people for their services. Now, when you're asking somebody to collect information for you at high risk to himself, I don't think there's anything wrong with rewarding him for his services. People who don't like that kind of activity label that bribery, because that makes it sound bad. So, it's a very difficult area to draw some very specific lines. I have to set a tone of leadership here that lets people know what the standards are, but dividing lines are often fuzzy, and you can't just write down express rules. You can for assassination, and maybe a few other things.

KENYON: Mitch Semmel?

SEMTEL: Do you then (GARBLED TAPE) the difficulty regarding the assassination of all the (UNCLEAR) brought to mind the problems that the world faces with regard to international terrorism. Fortunately, we in this country have been lucky enough to for the most part escape such incidents. But I wonder if you could outline some of the specific steps the CIA is taking to prevent such political fanaticism from seriously affecting people in the United States?

TURNER: We're into the terrorism anti-terrorism business in a big way. We're devoting a good portion of our activities to keeping track of, finding out about international terrorist activities, so that we can warn, alert our people, whether they're Americans traveling abroad or Americans in this country. We spend a good amount of time in cooperation with foreign intelligence services. If there's a benefit that's come to the world out of this international terrorism, it's promoting international cooperation in the exchange of information about these things, because it's a common problem to people.

KENYON: Dwight Holloway?

HOLLOWAY: Admiral Turner, the balance of power in the Middle East has received a lot of attention in the press lately. We've talked to Ambassador Simcha Dimitz of Israel and Ambassador Asraf Gorbal(?) of Egypt. However, Ambassador Gorbal mentioned that Israel had nuclear weapons in its arsenal. We asked Ambassador Dimitz, and he refused to comment. I was wondering if you have any information which would confirm or deny rumors that Israel has nuclear weapons?

TURNER: We started this conversation in talking about the need to preserve secrets, and there are some subjects that an intelligence officer cannot speak about in public.

KENYON: Shifting to a recent Presidential directive to ambassadors, I was wondering will your agents endeavor to keep the ambassadors, quote "throughly and currently informed about all their activities," unquote, in the words of the Vance directive?

TURNER: Absolutely. I signed the directive with Mr. Vance to both the ambassadors and our chiefs overseas, and under my administration, the CIA has been more forthcoming with ambassadors than ever before in history. We have to; the chief CIA man in each country must maintain close contact with the ambassador, because the ambassador is the boss of the team.

ANNOUNCER: A final question for our guest when "Focus on Youth" continues in a moment.

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KENYON: WELCOME back to "Focus on Youth." Our guest is Admiral Stanfield Turner, the Director of the CIA.

Admiral Turner, I'd just like to ask you a final question. If we came back to you ten years hence, what would you like to be doing then, and what would you like to have accomplished in the past ten years?

TURNER: I'd like to be right here; I'd like to have a feeling that we really had a single, integrated team of national intelligence activity in this country -- lots of separate activities, lots of separate agencies, but working together as a team, each one supporting the other one's weaknesses, gaps, so that we can pull it together for the good of our country.

KENYON: Admiral Stanfield Turner, thank you.